

NW

Real Estate and Adventures Around Bellingham, Washington!

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“Savor the sweet moments. Work hard. Look for the magic...”

Holly Roeger





The Way I Live... HOLLY ROGER

COMMUNITY CONNECTOR + ADVOCATE FOR PLAY + SUPER NATURE NERD

Interview by Brandon Nelson

Q: Holly, you're a co-founder of Wild Whatcom. Can you explain the program to the un-initiated?

A: I'm one of several co-founders, actually! Wild Whatcom came to be when two different programs merged. Aimee Frazier started the Explorers Club with her daughter and daughter's friends which expanded quickly to include a boys program. And Rachel Castor and I formed Wild Whatcom Walks with a focus on community nature programs and school field trips. Lucky for us, Randy Leventhal guided us into an independent non-profit with the support of a very committed Board. In short, Wild Whatcom is a local nature-exploring, non-profit organization that is all about connections - to place, self, community, and this earth! We explore nature through several program avenues: Explorers Club and Summer Adventures (specifically for youth), Schools (EdVentures, Neighborhood Nature, and SEED), and community-based family nature outings, plus women's explorations during the full moon. I think Wild Whatcom is most recognized for our work with children through Explorers Clubs, Wild Things, and school programs in Bellingham.

Q: You've worked in all of Wild Whatcom's programs, from the 'Community Programs' to 'Wild Things' to 'Explorers Club'... to working in schools. Do you have a favorite program?

A: Yes. All of them. Seriously, this is the hardest question because I love everything I get to do, for different reasons. Mentoring kids in Explorers Club, my focus is on youth development goals with nature as our background, playground, and teacher. I love this opportunity to watch kids grow and challenge themselves. Wild Things is a place-based connection program for parents and their children that's been exploring nature every week all year round

for 7 1/2 years. I like to say that it's a nature "class" for adults and a sensory-rich "experience" for kids, as my goal is for the adults to learn about where we live, and the kids to love being outdoors. We explore seasonal themes through a young child's lens of play and sheer exploration. Wild Things is all about the journey not the destination! We've been known to only move 100 yards down a trail in our hour-and-a-half exploration, because we've opened every berry and examined every nest along the way. Ladies Night Out is fun and magical in several ways. I love introducing folks to new places and spending time in nature at night, sharing our thoughts and chocolate. It's led to a sweet fun-loving community of women who venture out under the full moon routinely. I love the schools programs because we reach many children who may not otherwise have access to nature, and it's beautiful and inspiring to see their curiosity ignite and their understanding of the world bloom. Even in a place with as much natural beauty as Whatcom County, the gift of time in nature is a gift that not everyone is so fortunate to have.

Q: Your boys, Syllas and Leo, both attend Whatcom Hills Waldorf School. What makes Waldorf your school of choice for your kiddos?

A: Oh gosh, there's so much I appreciate about Waldorf education! I began researching Waldorf many years before I became a parent, as I've always been interested in different ways of exploring concepts and supporting diverse ways of learning. We used the terms 'alternative' and 'multi-disciplinary' to describe educational methods

that utilize the experience of the teacher, like learning by doing. For example, such experiential education incorporates language, art, music and physical movement to explore a concept, idea or story. I'm now an educator with a degree in environmental education who focuses on eco-literacy and facilitating people's connection to nature. Wouldn't it be great to always love learning? I'm always trying to figure out how to explain concepts in as many ways possible to be interesting and relevant for toddlers to high schoolers to adults. So, Waldorf's multi-disciplinary, reverence for nature, experiential and holistic approach to academics, the way the curriculum is rooted in child development, and the relationship between teachers and their students appealed to my family when it was time to choose a preschool experience for our 3 1/2 year old. We also appreciated the low media and non-consumerism life style, and time spent playing outdoors for our little guy.



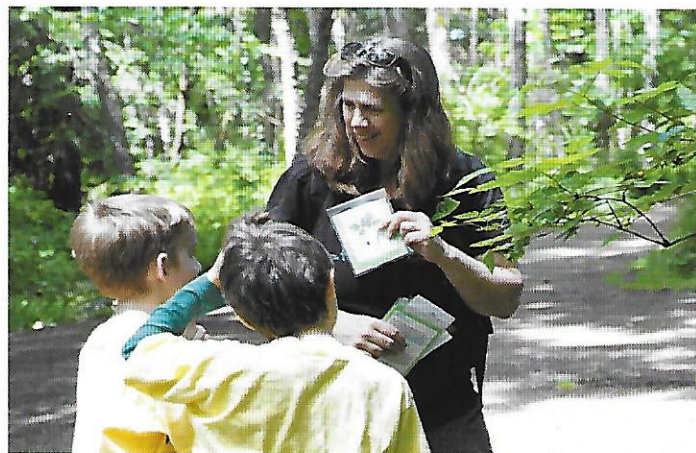
Q: What's are a few aspects of Waldorf you've come to particularly appreciate?

A: I especially appreciate the play-based and outdoor time in a child's early childhood, and the hands-on academics and science in the middle school. I love being involved with the school community, as it gives parents so many opportunities to model for our children what volunteering, supporting others and hard work looks like. It's an important family value of ours to participate in school activities in the classroom, or to show up for work parties and shovel mulch or paint fences. It's fun and great way to get to know other folks. Consequently my boys like to work hard, do a job well, and I'm proud of the way they bring their work ethic to service projects with Explorers Club.

Q: Can you describe Waldorf in a way that a total layperson who's never heard of it would understand?

A: I'd say that Waldorf education is an arts-infused, multi-sensory integrated approach to nurturing the development of the whole child with a curriculum that supports the physical, emotional and academic development of a child. The developmentally appropriate play-based preschool and kindergarten program inspires literacy and curiosity as a child enters the rigorous academics of the grades program. Every time I visit the first grade, I really wish I had gone to a Waldorf school as I see how they approach math with hands-on tasks, physical movement and imagination. Its the same in sixth

grade as the students study physics utilizing the scientific method. It's so inspiring to watch these kids love learning! I recommend taking a tour to see the education in action. It's an incredibly rich experiential education.



Q: What other programs are you involved in or supportive of that you'd like me to ask you about?

A: I would sure love to see more families participate in nature outings in our community. We live in such a nature-rich area, it's easier than one might think to get access and find something fun outdoors to do that's either free or low-cost.

In addition to Wild Whatcom, the local chapter of the North Cascades Audubon Society, Northwest Mushroomers, and Friends of Tennant Lake and Hovander Park offer field trips that are free or low cost. Bellingham Parks Dept, NSEA and the Whatcom Land Trust offer service projects on a regular basis that are fun and free.



Q: Wow! I am impressed!!! OK, how are we going to fix this crazy world?

A: Well, I have several ideas but let's always start with the Golden Rule, "Treat others how you would like to be treated". And by others, I mean all life. Other than that, know that everyone can make a difference in making their world a better place. And, let's play and explore outside more!

Q: In the end, what really matters?

A: Hugs. Time together. Being kind. Take care of each other. Savor the sweet moments. Work hard. Look for the magic, and the helpers. Be grateful. Love matters.